

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

The specification has been amended as follows:

Paragraph [0002] has been amended as follows:

[0002] Electron optical lens columns are used in order to produce lens effects on electron beams such as in scanning electron microscopes (SEMs) and ion beam (EB) equipment. An example of a lens column used in an SEM is described as an “electrostatic lens” in Japanese Unexamined Patent Application Publication H 6-187901.

Paragraph [0003] has been amended as follows:

[0003] However, recently there have been demands for high precision and tighter focusing of electron beams for the purposes of, for example, microlithography processes. Increasing the degree of focus requires high acceleration of the electrons through applying a high voltage. However, this engenders problems in terms of bulky and expensive equipment. Furthermore, high velocity electrons engender the following problems:

- (a) Because the electron beam penetrates the surface of the sample, it is no longer suitable for observing the surface.
- (b) There will be deleterious effects, such as the sample being destroyed by the electron beam.
- (c) With biological samples, the material is nonconductive, and thus electrostatic charge tends to build up. Charged material has an impact on the electric field, adversely affecting the precision of the focus of the electron beam.